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CalFed

CALIFORNIA
Business/Labor/Water Leaders Coalition
PROMOTING INVESTMENT IN CALIFORNIA'S WATER FUTURE

June 25, 1999

Agricultural Council of California
Association of California Water Agencies
Bay Area Council
California Building Industry Association
California Business Properties Association
California Chamber of Commerce
California Council for Environmental and Economic Balance
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Manufacturers Association
California State Council of Laborers
Central Valley Project Water Association
Corning Water District
Friant Water Users Authority
Kern County Water Agency
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce
Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
Modesto Irrigation District
Mountain Counties Water Resources Association
Municipal Water District of Orange County
North Delta Water Agency
Northern California Water Association
Orange County Business Council
San Diego County Water Authority
San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors Water Authority
San Joaquin River Group
San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority
Santa Clara Valley Water District
Southern California Water Committee
State Water Contractors
Tehama Colusa Canal Authority
Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District
Western Growers Association
Westlands Water District
Wheeler Ridge-Maricopa Water Storage District

To The California State Legislature:

We write to express our support for actions by Senator Costa and Assemblyman Machado to resolve a pressing water supply problem in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Bay-Delta. As you may know, we are concerned over restrictions imposed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) upon state and federal water pumping facilities on the Delta.

As became clear Tuesday in a joint hearing of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife and Senate Agriculture and Water Resources Committees, this issue can seriously compromise water supplies for crops in the San Joaquin Valley, and reduce both the quality and supply of water for Silicon Valley industry.

This situation arose when the Service directed the Bureau of Reclamation and the State Water Project to reduce pumping due to higher than normal concentrations of Delta Smelt, a small freshwater fish protected under the Endangered Species Act. During Tuesday's joint hearing the committees heard testimony from state and federal officials, environmental, industry and agricultural stakeholders regarding the federal restrictions that seek to protect the Delta Smelt through curtailed pumping. While it is a complex issue with no easy answers, several conclusions can be drawn from Tuesday's testimony.

First, the risk to both water supply and water quality is real. To offset supply reductions precipitated by the restrictions, the San Luis Reservoir is being drawn down to levels that may preclude deliveries to Silicon Valley by August. As supply declines, water quality suffers in turn. We have now reached a point where Silicon Valley manufacturers may face economically damaging water quality degradation, and farmers could literally run out of water during the peak of the growing season.

Second, while the Service must protect Delta Smelt under the Endangered Species Act, it is not clear that the current pumping restrictions are necessary to carry out that responsibility. It appears from the testimony at the joint hearing that the actual effect of the pumps on the Delta Smelt population may not be significant enough to warrant the pumping restrictions. Additional evidence of this may be seen in the less restrictive way in which the Service has handled similar risks to Delta Smelt at other locations on the Delta.

Third, in light of the lack of evidence that Delta Smelt will be placed in jeopardy by an increase in export pumping, and the clear evidence of damage to water users, we ask that you support action to resolve this impasse, and resume normal pumping at the Delta export pumps. Further, we ask that you work with local

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agencies to develop compensation for the measures they are already taking to shift their demands to other, more costly sources of supply in an effort to avert this crisis.

Unfortunately, from a review of the Bay-Delta Accord and the history of the CALFED effort, it is clear that this crisis could have been avoided. The Bay-Delta Accord entered into by the United States and the State of California has not provided Delta export users with the protection from endangered species actions that were advertised. Both this emergency, and earlier actions of the Service on in-Delta barriers, have raised real questions about the commitment of the Service to work toward balanced solutions. The Endangered Species Act calls for the federal government to cooperate with state and local agencies to resolve conflicts between preservation of endangered species and reliable water supplies. At this point the Service appears to be ignoring the serious concerns of state and local agencies.

This entire situation points to how stressed the Bay-Delta watershed has become, and how urgently we need to invest in improvements. Without those improvements, conflicts like this will continue to erupt, with ongoing damage to the water quality and supplies which California's population and economy has come to depend on.

As part of the CALFED effort, state and federal agencies and stakeholders spent January and February of this year developing a program known as the Environmental Water Account to avert just this type of crisis. Unfortunately, that program was halted by the U.S. Department of the Interior before it could be completed. As a result, the state of California is forced to manage the water supply for a \$28 billion agriculture industry and a \$160 billion computer industry in crisis mode. Instead of a proactive CALFED success story, we are left with yet another example of poor planning that requires emergency measures to solve.

Our organizations recognize the critical role CALFED plays in developing comprehensive solutions that balance ecosystem and water supply needs in the Delta. However, while CALFED is in the process of developing that comprehensive solution, it is essential that the agencies that comprise CALFED work to avoid, rather than cause, this type of crisis.

Please support Senator Costa and Assemblyman Machado's effort to minimize the impact of the federal pumping restrictions on water users in your area, and re-emphasize the need for collaboration for a successful CALFED effort.

Sincerely,

California Business / Labor / Water Leaders Coalition

/signed

See Signatories

cc: Governor Gray Davis
Resources Agency Secretary Mary Nichols
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